

2899

Henry Sara.

MSS.15x/2/396/2

AN EYE-WITNESS
FROM
RUSSIA

By JOHN RICKMAN, M.A., M.B., B.C.

[Recently returned from Russia]

PRICE THREEPENCE.

Published by the PEOPLE'S RUSSIAN INFORMATION BUREAU
152 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

March, 1919.

UNIVERSITY of WARWICK LIBRARY
Maitland / Sara Collection

An Eye-witness *from* Russia

INTRODUCTION

[REPRINTED FROM "THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN."]

[The writer of this and the articles which will follow has been in Russia since the autumn of 1916 engaged in relief work under the Society of Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee. His work has brought him into an intimate contact with the peasants in their villages, and has enabled him to see their life and follow their thoughts from an unusually close range.

After leaving the town of Buzuluk in July, 1918, he travelled across Siberia in close touch with the Czechs during their slow advance, and was able to watch the political events as they might have been seen by newspaper correspondents had they been there, and at the same time, because of his peasant pronunciation of Russian and familiarity with the Russian people, to catch the drift of undercurrents which are less visible from the view-point of those whose dealings led them into high places.]

The relief unit of which I am a member went to the Buzuluk department of the Samara government in the summer of 1916, and worked almost all the time in the villages of that district. My contact with the people of Russia in this way was rather unique in that as a country doctor I was brought close to the home life and customs of the peasants, and I obtained an insight into the minds of a people who are slow to reveal themselves to strangers.

During the successive changes in government I watched the developing political consciousness of the peasants and noted their gradual change in attitude towards the Government and their generosity of sentiment with regard to it. I was always treated well in the villages, because my work was one which was considered of social value, and as a physician I was regarded as a workman with special training and therefore a valuable acquisition to the district.

In July, 1918, after the Czechs had captured the province and the railway and a Te Deum had been sung in the Cathedral in Samara by the Archbishop because Siberia was rid of the Bolsheviks, I travelled to Samara on the way to England. In that town I came into contact with the American Y.M.C.A. and the Czech officials, and mixed with consuls and in Russian society for the first time. I was now no longer a workman valuable because

of special training, but a foreigner, and as I was in uniform I appeared to be a person of rank or position. I saw the gulf that lay between the upper classes and the peasants. Detached from the land, having interests in the problems of empire, the upper classes seemed hardly of the same people as the moujiks, whose chief concerns were in the social relationships and government of their village communities. I was treated as a "traveller," and told the Russian society people about the life of their own peasants.

The journey through Siberia was eased by the fact that I carried official papers for the Samara branch of the American Consulate General in Moscow and because of the kindness which the Czechs extended to the English and Americans. I received letters of recommendation which gave me the privilege of having reserved coupés when the trains were so crowded that each car had an average of ten people on the roof. At the stations the thousand passengers turned out of the carriages and cattle trucks (there was one of the former to forty of the latter) to stretch themselves or get boiling water for tea. In the rush to get hot water or buy food the sense of equality which the Revolution brought asserted itself, and foreign officer and peasant, Englishman, Russian, Kirghis, stood in line and waited their turn. Things were different in the old régime.

By means of the letters of recommendation I was able to reach Irkutsk from Samara in the amazingly short period of ten days, changing from passenger trains to hospital trains, to military trains, to peasants' carts as occasion demanded, the line not being continuous owing to bridges being destroyed. There I was delayed two months owing to the Bolsheviks still being in force (and fighting) round Baikal and Chita. In Irkutsk I lived with General Illyashavitch, ex-Chief of Staff of the Third Siberian Army Corps (old régime), with whom I used to talk far into the night on the political situation. From him and from the members of the Consular Corps, from the representatives of the Social Revolutionary Right, and from peasants and workmen with whom I talked I was able to get a variety of new political impressions which led me to suspend judgments which I may have formed with respect to Bolshevism, just as under the influence of the peasants I had learned to suspend judgment on the administration of the old régime.

Travelling through Manchuria and in Vladivostok I came for

the first time into contact with the Allies, and so added another political point of view to my collection.

My impression on that journey was that I was travelling in a different direction from that usually taken by foreigners; I was travelling from the village, the life of the village, to the city, and so on to foreign opinions. The experience led me to reflect on the basis on which most opinions on Russia are formed. The village was not to me a curiosity, it was normal Russian life; the opinions of the village were the first Russian opinions I gathered first-hand. As they differed greatly from my usual stock of ideas I began to see the necessity of analysing the sources of all opinions, and so when I talked with consuls, generals, engine-drivers, and moujiks I found myself first trying to see whence they received their ideas, and next what were their ideals in life and in government.

II.

A Rural District under the Bolsheviks.

In the following article I discuss the condition of a rural district under Bolshevik rule during the winter and spring of 1917-18. At that time I was engaged in relief work in the Buzuluk department of the Samara government on behalf of the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee.

Of all the industrial and economic enterprises in the district none suffered less change than the Co-operative Society, which had been started before the war under the old régime, and which continued unchanged under the Provisional and Kerensky Governments, and enlarged its membership 500 per cent. under the Bolsheviks. In the time I speak of the Co-operative Society had virtually become a monopoly, and had either put out of business or absorbed the small traders. It could get credit from the Soviet, was recognised by the railway officials almost as a Government department, and could undertake purchasing operations on a large scale and look to guarantee of transport. It had an organisation of sub-branches in nearly every village, and could distribute and sell its goods without having to get permits and licences from the Soviet. The Government decided to purchase wheat and rye in Siberia for seed and consumption, and naturally placed the order with the Co-operative Society. Purchase of medical requirements in Moscow for the numerous Soviet hospitals was done through the same channel, members of the

Soviet often travelling with the buyers in order to guarantee good faith.

The profits of the Co-operative Society, which were reduced to a minimum, but which on the millions of roubles of turnover amounted to a considerable sum, were devoted to educational purposes. Evening classes were started in modern languages, geography, history, and the Russian language; in bookkeeping and business training; subsidies were granted for agricultural colleges and schools, and scholarships were founded for the gymnasias (secondary schools).

An Educational Revival.

The educational programme of the Bolsheviks was ambitious, but it was this ambitiousness which commended it to the people. The Bolsheviks aimed at starting a school in every village and increasing the number of gymnasias in the district and founding a university, but in this project they were stopped by lack of teachers. To overcome this difficulty they started training colleges for teachers, which were financed by the Soviet. Scholarships were given to promising pupils, which would carry them through the gymnasias and on to the universities already founded, such as those at Kazan, Odessa, and Samara. In this work they co-operated with the Buzuluk Co-operative Society.

The enthusiasm of teachers for their work, which had been depressed by the restrictions of the old régime, revived. They gave up their holidays to attend university extension lectures and evening classes, in order to improve their teaching capacity for the coming terms. Technical classes were started, and the agricultural schools and colleges, some of which were already in operation under the old régime, were revived, additional instructors obtained, and new institutions begun. The thoroughness with which the educational programme was dealt with is illustrated by a movement to start a George Junior Republic by the President of the Teachers' Union, a man who had come from Moscow. (A "George Junior Republic," it may be explained, is an experiment which has been successfully tried in the United States for giving self-government to wayward boys and girls who have not proved amenable to ordinary school discipline.) On this subject, as on many others dealing with education, he sought the advice of English and Americans who had had experience in educational problems and with kindred activities.

such as the Boy Scout movement. Under the stricter days of the old régime the Boy Scout movement was not permitted in Russia, but latterly was allowed a certain amount of liberty under police supervision. Under the Bolsheviks, however, it flourished, and troops were formed in many of the cities and department towns.

We had few industries in our district, and the few we had were nearly all taken over by the Soviet. A lumber factory, previously run by the Ministry of Forestry with the help of the Zemstvo, was now run by the Soviet of the department, which controlled the same geographical area as the Zemstvo. The wages paid in this factory to the workmen were 300 roubles per month, and the organisation was such that the factory ran full time and could not extend itself, owing to the food shortage in the immediate neighbourhood and to the absence of empty houses near by which prevented an influx of workmen. A large flour mill fitted with the latest machinery was taken over by the Soviet, and, under great difficulties owing to shortage of paraffin and small parts needed for repairs, was able not only to pay its way and its workmen, but also to be a rich source of revenue to the community.

The forests were controlled, so far as they were controlled at all, by the Soviet, who employed the forestry experts who had been brought into the district by the old régime. The forestry schools were full, the Soviet realising the great value of expert advice in any matter that pertained to industry or agriculture.

Railway Administration.

Perhaps in no department of administration did the Bolsheviks realise the need for humouring their workmen more than in the control of the railways. Under the old régime it was a notorious fact that local abuses could never be remedied, suggestions for the improvement of the service received practically no attention at headquarters, and without permission given in writing from headquarters no variation in routine was permitted. There had accumulated through the years in the minds of all the railway workers little ideas which they individually would like to have seen tried, and in the minds both of the workers and of the public there was an impression that the central control from Moscow or Petrograd should be loosened. Soon after the Bolsheviks came into power they showed their wisdom and their courage by favour-

ing an experiment which should teach the people a lesson and satisfy the minds of the workmen with respect to these innumerable little ideas which had irritated them because they had been neglected. Accordingly the railway passing through every county in the Samara government, at any rate, was placed under the full control of the county Soviet. No train could pass along that line without the permission of the county Soviet, and the head stationmaster in the county was made Commissary of Railways.

Complete disorganisation resulted—which was what the Bolsheviks wanted. We were told by one such Commissary that the boiler-cleaners had devised a new way for cleaning the engines—one of the little ideas that had rankled long in their minds. He gave them full permission to go ahead and clean the engines in their own way. Within a week the engine-drivers complained; so he called a meeting—one of millions of such meetings—and let the engine-drivers and engine-cleaners settle the matter in their own way. Within a day the old system of engine-cleaning was restored, to the complete satisfaction of both. In this way the Bolsheviks were building up again a stable railway system, based not so much on orders from Moscow which had to be obeyed as on motives for good work and co-operation which carried their own inducement.

On the land question the Bolsheviks and the peasants were of differing opinions. The former wished to manage the large estates with agricultural experts and the latest machinery that could be obtained; the latter wished to own the land communally, according to the village custom. Nationalisation of land has never appealed to the peasants; village ownership has almost always seemed to them the proper course. There might have been a serious division between the Bolsheviks and the peasants had the matter come to a head, but as there was not enough rye or wheat for planting in the peasants' own allotments the question of what was to be done with the large estates did not arise.

Food, Medicine, and Justice.

Food committees were established in every district for the purpose of commandeering food and for its just distribution, and revenue was raised by the Soviet by means of commandeering stores and selling part of the produce so taken at a high price. Another source of revenue was a capital levy, another by taxation

on wages and salaries. No one was exempt. The banks were controlled by the Soviet, and the limit that any private person was allowed to withdraw in any month without previous permission was fixed at 100 roubles.

The medical needs of the community were met by department medical committees and village committees centring round the hospitals. The public sent their delegates to these committees, representing the patients; the doctors in their capacity as workmen also sent delegates. Accounts were audited by a neutral body, usually the Soviet of the district.

The Russian public had not been accustomed to reliable law courts or a just police administration. Under the Bolsheviks, as under the Provisional and Kerensky Governments, the villages appointed their own police when necessary, choosing the oldest men as those most likely to have wisdom and discretion in human affairs. The Red Guard, and later the Red Army, supplemented and sometimes over-rode the simple requirements of the peasants. For six months under Bolshevik rule order of a kind superior to that ever experienced under the old régime was maintained.

As an instance of this may be mentioned the way in which the old régime and the Bolsheviks dealt with illegal vodka distilling. In the days of the Imperial police anyone caught in the act was arrested by the police, but, as everyone knew, each offence had its price, except that of political propaganda, and a sum of money, amounting maybe to several hundred or several thousand roubles, would settle the matter, and until the time of blackmail came round again the business could continue unmolested, however much the public might be against it. Under the Bolsheviks a man found distilling vodka would not be punished, but his still would be taken from him, the public would be informed of his guilt, and the amount of grain which the food committee would allow him to buy would be limited to that needed for his own domestic use.

III.

Rise of the Czecho-Slovak Movement.

[Mr. Rickman went to Russia in the autumn of 1916 to carry on relief work under the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee. In July, 1918, he left the town of Buzuluk, in the Samara government, and travelled across Siberia, in close touch with the Czecho-Slovaks during their slow advance.]

The characteristic feature of the Czecho-Slovak movement in Russia and Siberia is the intense national feeling among the

officers and men which led them to desert from the Austro-German Armies. Practically all the troops deserted and many of the officers fled from their country in the last days of July, 1914, rather than fight on behalf of the Austro-German Government. Apparently it was a feature of the Austrian army that Czech battalions should be commanded by officers who were not of Czech nationality. In the same way Italian troops were not officered by Italians, because the Imperial Government was afraid that national feeling might override Imperial loyalty. Talking with Czechs, one hears again and again of the plots which were schemed and carried out on the eastern front, when officers were shot and battalions in the night quietly slipped over to friendly Russia, carrying with them sometimes full equipment, leaving dangerous gaps in the Austrian line.

The Imperial Russian Government, however glad it might be to have a break in the line of the enemy, did not receive these deserters from Imperial rule with the welcome which they had expected, and for the most part the Czechs who had thus seriously compromised their position at home were admitted into Russia only as prisoners. Under the Provisional Government their position noticeably improved; under Kerensky's they received the welcome and recognition so long delayed. They were organised again as fighting battalions, and became the backbone of Kerensky's army and the chief factor in his advance. When the armies of the new Russian Republic melted away, these Czecho-Slovak visitors were the only effective fighting force left, and it was by them that the Ukraine was held.

The French Offer.

When it appeared that fighting could not be resumed effectively on the eastern front the French offered to take the Czecho-Slovaks, via America, to the western front, promising them a pleasant journey round the world and a welcome at the other end. As evidence of good faith they sent money to Russia for their pay and for new equipment, leaving it to the Czechs themselves to arrange the details of the expenditure of this money. The Bolsheviks promised transport across Russia and Siberia on condition that the arms and the men should travel on different trains. An allowance of one rifle per waggon was permitted.

The slow journey began. The disorganisation of the railways at that time and the small number of locomotives contributed to

make the transport of 60,000 men over a stretch of 6,000 miles of line a very serious problem. In order not to hold up normal traffic, the trains were released slowly, so that there should be about 200 miles between each train and the next. Each of these trains had to be hauled over three mountain ranges, and the number of special locomotives available for this purpose was very limited. Life on such a journey as this was monotonous to a degree. Living on freight cars often held up days at a time at wayside stations, out of touch with civilisation and their comrades, it was natural that the troops should be brought to a condition of nervous irritability for which there seemed no remedy. Naturally active and holding in their minds all the time the ideal of fighting for and liberating their country from the hated German rule, they showed the impatience of youth and the suspiciousness of an oppressed people. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had placed the Bolsheviks in a bad position, and they suspected them of being in the pay of the Germans and of deliberately retarding their progress on the 20,000-mile journey to the French front.

There were grounds, perhaps, for this suspicion. Trotsky had hoped that if they were delayed long enough in free Russia they would come to see the Bolshevik position and would be as unwilling to fight for French capitalists as they were to fight for Austro-German Imperial rule. While Trotsky was spreading Bolshevik propaganda among the troops, the Social Revolutionary Right and many who were frankly reactionary also employed propaganda. The latter group played on the anti-German passion of the Czechs as much as Trotsky appealed to the sense of international brotherhood and to the pacifist attitude. Some of the Czechs were afraid of being trapped by the Bolsheviks and handed over to Germany. On what grounds this fear was based I was quite unable to discover.

The Czech Rising.

Owing to the prolonged inaction of the men and to the tense atmosphere caused by so much propaganda, conditions were ripe for an outbreak. Towards the middle of May a disturbance occurred in Penza, and the town fell into the hands of the enemy, as at Jericho, at the blast of a trumpet. The Czecho-Slovaks seized ammunition and pressed on to Suizran. The Bolshevik guard at the great bridge over the Volga were surprised in the night, and Samara followed in the course of a few days.

The course of events in Tchelyabinsk is characteristic of the uprising. A Magyar prisoner of war, a servant of the railways, had a dispute with some Czechs. In the fight which followed the Magyar was killed, and the authorities of the town protested and imprisoned the men who had killed him. There were two trainloads of Czechs in the Tchelyabinsk station at the time, and the men on them felt that their national honour was at stake owing to this imprisonment. They seemed to see in this the guiding hand of Germany and a clear evidence that the Bolsheviks intended to stop their journey. They demanded that the civil authorities should release their comrades, and followed their demand immediately by a demonstration of force. They shot about a dozen of the militia who were guarding the town, rushed the magazine, and captured all the arms and ammunition. This was done with a force of not more than 100 rifles, but it must be remembered that in Tchelyabinsk there was not at that time a Bolshevik force, but only a few platoons of militia.

At this point the Czech National Council and their French advisers recommended that matters should quiet down and that the Czechs should hand over the town again to the Bolsheviks. This course, after severe comment and much irritation, was adopted, and they returned to their trains expecting to proceed. But on that day they heard that fighting had occurred between the Bolsheviks and the Czechs at several points on the line. Orders had come through from Major Gaida that all telegraph stations were to be seized, and no messages sent except by Czech officers. The town was recaptured in a few hours by the Czechs.

Fighting continued all along the Siberian line, and towards the end of June Irkutsk fell into the hands of the Czechs. Soon after this happened Colonel Emerson, of the American Railroad Commission, arrived in the city and tried to arbitrate between the Czechs and the Bolsheviks. As a condition of armistice the Czechs gave up Irkutsk to the Bolsheviks. The period of armistice came to an end without a decision of peace, because the suspicion was again aroused that the Czechs were being held up by the Bolsheviks at the instigation of Germany.

In Manchuria.

In Russia and Siberia the political situation was simple in the extreme compared with that which existed in Manchuria.

General Horvat, who had been appointed governor of Kharbin by the Tsar, and who was vice-president of the Chinese Eastern Railway, had kept the old régime element in such a strong position that Bolshevism never got a hold in Manchuria. The General exerted his personal power in every direction. He would not permit the Czechs who were already in Vladivostok to come to the assistance of their comrades in Central Siberia by means of his direct Trans-Manchurian line, and the burden of the military operations, therefore, in the capture of Tchita and Verkne Udinsk fell upon General Gaida, who was embarrassed by difficulties of transport and long lines of communication in unfriendly territory, and this action of General Horvat probably delayed the opening of the Trans-Siberian line for several weeks. The Bolsheviks, in retiring from the Trans-Baikal region, were forced to take the northern route by the Amur, where they were met by Japanese, Chinese, and American troops, or else to lay down their arms and go south, scattering themselves in North China. General Horvat, in his capacity as dictator in Manchuria, was able to show his sympathy now to one party, now to another. In the second week of September General Simeonoff was in favour, but the Allies were not. Later on the Allies were in favour, but Simeonoff was not recognised, and the struggle to maintain a balance of power exercised the minds of all diplomats except the American, who were content to wait until all these "natives" should settle their affairs in their own way.

The political situation in Vladivostok caused the greatest anxiety to all parties. In the early morning of July 3 the Czechs attacked the town from the surrounding hills and drove the Bolsheviks into the central square. At that moment the Bolsheviks were surprised by machine-gun fire from the roof of the British Consulate, H.M.S. Suffolk having contributed the guns and, we heard, also the men. The Bolsheviks regarded this as an act of war, and used it as a means of propaganda. The Allies and the Czechs took the town, put the Bolshevik civil authorities in prison, and declared that they would give the town a free election without the possibility of Bolshevik coercion. The Bolshevik civil authorities who were in prison were returned at the election, and the Allies and Russians who were co-operating stated that as the men who had been elected were serving their sentences in prison a new Government would have to be constituted. This action was used by the Bolsheviks for the purposes of propaganda. On the 12th of August a state of war was

declared between Great Britain and the Government of Central Russia, and the Bolsheviks used as an argument for recruiting the fact that their enemies were attempting to dictate the form of government which should be adopted by the Russian people.

IV.

The Red Army and the Czecho-Slovak Forces.

A comparison between the Red Army and the Czecho-Slovak forces should reveal factors which may go a long way towards explaining some of the sharp contrasts in the two movements in Russia that stand at the back of these bodies.

Among the motives which induced men to join the Red Army of the Bolsheviks these may be noted. There was a feeling in the minds of many people that the ideals which the Revolution stood for were in some danger of being crushed. They felt impulsively that if considerable numbers joined the Army of the Revolution a greater security would result, and thus the delicate task of embodying the national desire and the national consciousness in a suitable instrument of government would be facilitated. They set about forming this army with the forgetfulness of self so characteristic of the Russian, and often considered that good intentions might be a substitute for the colder task of political and military organisation. While this desire for security influenced many men in the earlier days of the Bolshevik movement, the hard conditions of life in Russia and increasing poverty led many family men with dependents to seek employment in the Red Guard, because the wages were good and the conditions as to food and clothing were excellent. For the latter reasons many joined towards the end of the winter of 1917-18 who saw no other alternative but starvation. This probably was the reason why many Austro-German prisoners of war found themselves in the ranks of the Red Army. But another motive in this case must also be considered. The Bolshevik programme stood for internationalism, and while few prisoners of war that I spoke to were able to explain exactly what this meant, yet a very strong impression was gathered that in the minds of these men internationalism meant some kind of international brotherhood.

The source from which the Czecho-Slovak forces were drawn was almost entirely the body of deserters from the Austro-German armies. Very few comparatively were of other nationality than Czecho-Slovak, or from any other source. While the source of recruits for the Czecho-Slovaks was of one nationality, the sources of the Bolshevik armies were more numerous. While the motives for joining the Red Army were in nearly all cases complex, those which caused allegiance to the Czecho-Slovaks were simple, and among them we may name intense anti-German feeling, promises (and pay) from the French, and—of less weight—an element of adventure which at any time and at any place may cause young men in a foreign country, without dependents, to approximate to the position of being soldiers of fortune.

Discipline and Fighting Ability.

The Bolshevik recruits were familiar with the village form of government. It was therefore natural that they should introduce into their army the same type of administration and discipline which obtains in the *mir*, or village council. In our sense of the word, discipline was lax, but the spirit of brotherhood was strong, and the men were accustomed to acting upon the compelling force, not of orders from a superior officer, but of the will of the meeting. Putting this into other words, the men obeyed a committee of the regiment or platoon, which was elected by themselves and which took its authority solely from the will of the regiment or platoon expressed in mass meetings. The nature of the Czecho-Slovak discipline is determined by its origin—severe German army training, officered by men who had learnt their method in Germany and received encouragement under the old régime of the Tsar.

The type of fighting natural to each follows from the character of the discipline on the two sides. The Bolsheviks were good at guerilla warfare. The excitement and comradeship of fighting in small machine-gun squads and in daring exploits on the part of small platoons seriously limited the character of the campaigns of which they were capable. Their General Staff work and their artillery were praised by all observers, and in these branches of the service they received much assistance from the anti-German pro-internationalist Austrian and German prisoners of war who

adhered to their cause. The Czecho-Slovaks were good at fighting in open formation, at timed attacks, and at methods of warfare which might involve co-operation among widely extended units. Relatively to the Bolsheviks, I think it is correct to say that their staff work and their artillery were poor, but their weakness in theory was made good by the excellence of their practice. The Bolsheviks were stronger in theory than in practice.

The contrast between the two forces reveals itself in the spirit in which their campaigns were conducted. The Bolshevik recruits were largely boys to whom fighting for the Revolution was a kind of romance. They felt that they were protecting the liberties and the unity of Russia. There was a strong romantic attachment to their cause, and though conscious of many backslidings they were also conscious of a power which lay within themselves to lead them on with courage and devotion to great service for their country and humanity.

Czecho-Slovak Bitterness.

The Czecho-Slovaks also were fired with the idea of fighting for the liberation of their country from an oppressor, and they were banded together for this end. They came naturally or were led to see this oppressor stretch out his hand into a distant country and thwart them in their task of national liberation by the method of turning the Bolsheviks against them. What justification they had for holding this idea was discussed in the previous article, but it may be repeated here that what ideas did not come to them through their own observations were pressed upon them by the Allies. Thinking as they did that the underhand methods of Germany were working in the Bolshevik community, they vented their hatred of the oppressor on his supposed ally. Seeing no hope for Europe or for humanity unless the German power was completely crushed, it was but a step for them to come to the position that there was no hope for humanity unless Bolshevism and the Bolsheviks were annihilated.

Their sense of duty to this new undertaking induced a bitterness of spirit towards the new enemy which characterised not only the details of their military operations, instanced by executing all the prisoners they took, but also their relation to the civil Government of Russia. It may here be mentioned that in assisting in the establishment of a new Government they showed their

antagonism to the old by permitting a régime which differed so far from the Bolsheviks' as closely to resemble the Imperial administration of Germany.

V.

The "Red" and the "Red and White" Terrors.

The two opposing forces in Russia and Siberia which we have grouped under the names of Red Army and Czecho-Slovaks were really composite, but the names given indicate in both cases the dominant military force. The Bolsheviks had ranged against them an alliance, or, perhaps more properly, an association, which did not gain in strength by including groups of widely differing character. From a military point of view the Czecho-Slovak forces were the most important. They acted as a screen behind which it was possible to raise regiments which, it was hoped, later could co-operate with them. In the Samara region of Russia the "Narodny Army," which, translated, means the "People's Army," was so formed, and was officered by men of the Cadet and Social Revolutionary Right persuasions, and received both sympathy and actual support from the reactionary old régime element. Another of the associates had always shown a reactionary tendency—the Cossacks. Those from Orenburg and Uralsk at first professed themselves Republicans, later Limited Monarchists, and eventually rallied round the Grand Duke Michael and desired his restoration to the throne, as was suggested in the manifesto of abdication of Nicholas II. In Siberia the regiments raised behind the Czecho-Slovak screen adopted the green and white colours of the "Republic of Siberia," and were officered by old régime officials and people of the Social Revolutionary Right party. In Manchuria politics and the military were in such a state of constant change and confusion that relatively slight military assistance could be rendered from that quarter.

In the other camp divisions of party were by no means so strongly marked, but the difficulty of carrying out an active military campaign arose from the fact that the units composing the Bolshevik army, while united for the general purpose of up-

holding and "protecting" the Revolution, contained within themselves a factor which tended towards disintegration, because of the intensely strong feeling of localism which pervaded the regiments. In one respect the Bolsheviks were at an advantage in that they were fighting an association of reactionaries, Cossacks, Czechs, and later the Allies, whereas their enemies were fighting but a single army, which, though it was heterogeneous, yet roughly represented a single idea. Considering the great diversity of the two associations, it is perhaps remarkable that the co-operation on both sides was as good as it proved to be. It certainly speaks for a generosity of sentiment towards one's friends which is all the more noteworthy when one considers the bitterness of political relations in Russia during the last fifty years. The Czech-Cossack-Reactionary combination was not led by any dominating personality, nor did it stand for any clearly expressed ideals. It sought but one thing—to eliminate Bolshevism and the Bolsheviks from Russia and Siberia and leave a clear field for political parties of lively, though varied, enthusiasms.

A Contrast in Aims.

Permitting oneself to generalise, it may be said that the Czech combination sought to *re-establish* in Russia a political system; the Bolsheviks sought to *construct a new Russia*. The Bolsheviks turned their attention to the undeveloped capacities of the people; their opponents concentrated their attention on building up a new State from the *débris* of the old. Time was the most important factor in bringing both parties to action. It seemed clear to some people that the longer the Bolsheviks were in power the greater would be the process of dissolution, and, to continue the metaphor, the *débris* would be reduced to a finer state of subdivision. Therefore the longer the delay the harder would be the task of reconstructing the State from the broken remains of the old régime. At all costs the Bolshevik power must be broken at once, and, however distasteful it might be, the use of severe measures and bloodshed must in the end be a wise economy. Faith in the essential soundness of the system of the old régime justified the means they adopted, and appeared to sanctify their hatred for the Bolsheviks. Orders were promulgated that all commissaries and members of the Soviet and all men in the Red

Guard captured were to be shot. In the Buzuluk department of the Samara government, the district of which I am now speaking, the "Red and White" (Czech) Terror preceded the "Red" Terror. Under the "Red" Terror one morning two dozen people were executed after the publication of the orders just mentioned, the victims belonging to families who had pronounced their affection for the old régime, and therefore were not popular in the district.

The effect of these Terrors on the civil population was easy to observe and as easy to estimate. When the Czechs had taken our town there was a "Te Deum" in the principal church, and thanks were offered up to God because the country had been rid of a vile enemy, which enemy, the people said, they had elected to govern them. It is true that there was not perfect freedom under the Bolsheviki, but in the welter of ideas in which we all lived the restraints were not very obvious, and, though there was a censorship of the telegraph and to some extent of the press up to the time of the Czech outbreak, we were conscious more of the influence of public opinion than of political pressure put upon us by any one party.

Under the new régime instituted behind the screen of the Czech forces we were conscious of the pressure of one political party, and we noted the suppression of the influence of public opinion. In the town of Buzuluk we saw the Cossacks driving through the streets with a cartload of headless bodies, the peasants remarking, "Those bodies were our sons; they joined the Red Guard to defend the Revolution." The next day, while the Cossacks were patrolling the town, an "election" was held on a limited franchise, and candidates for office were required to have the signature on their papers of certain persons who had held office under the old régime. A Council was thus elected which bore a close resemblance to that which had existed in 1916, the comment of people on the street being, "This is too reactionary for us."

Within about a week the Bolshevik days seemed but a memory. For the first time for many months the rank of officers was distinguished by their insignia, the social position of the ladies by their silk dresses. Public notices told the people of the reign of "prosperity." The banks were opened and free trading re-established. It was no longer necessary, in a country almost destitute of materials, to show proof that an old suit was

worn out before a new one could be bought. Articles of adornment and the necessities of life were on sale in the shops and bazaars, but at such prices that only the rich could buy. If the Bolshevik programme came upon Russia too hastily, it is true to add that the return to "prosperity" was also too rapid. The people grumbled.

Bolshevism Preferred to Reaction.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Czecho-Slovaks should after three months have found their position on the Volga and in the Samara government to be untenable, and that they should have been forced to retire because of grave discontent among the people. Faced with the alternative of Bolshevism or a Government which they considered both oppressive and reactionary, it was not unnatural that the people should prefer Bolshevism, because, though it might spell chaos, it did permit a degree of freedom for opinions, and its programme included projects, such as those dealing with education, which the people considered of vital importance.

When I was discussing Bolshevism with peasants last April they used to say to me: "How do we know whether it is good or bad? It will need to be tried for ten or twenty years." And when I expostulated and said that our Governments changed more rapidly than that, they were wont to reply that that surely indicated that the political intuitions of the English were more acute than theirs. It is clear that the unfair impatience of those who screened their Government behind the Cossacks and the Czechs, and who overthrew the Bolsheviks, was also shared by those who in October, 1918, turned out the new Government and embraced Bolshevism again. For the new régime had not had time to prove its worth, and had this to its credit, that it expended a great deal of energy in re-establishing the railway service, in opening the banks, and in placing the large business concerns on a different basis. Those who had tolerated the confusion of the Bolsheviks should not have been too exacting in their demands on the new Government. The *débris* of an old system littered the path of the Bolsheviks in their task of regeneration; no less did the *débris* resulting from Bolshevism lie in the path of those who desired to see the old political system rebuilt.

The Bolshevik Government.

[REPRINTED FROM THE "LABOUR LEADER,"]

The Bolsheviks came into power largely because the other candidates, perhaps through no fault of their own, did not appear to be giving the people what they wanted, because the Constituent Assembly seemed likely to repeat the faults of the previous Governments and to embarrass the movement towards freedom by compromises with a class which had always held power. Having gained power the Bolsheviks more slowly gained popularity.

The Social Revolutionary *right* party had on its programme the nationalising of the land, but it held the idea that the Socialist programme must come slowly; it was in favour of disposing of the estates only when the peasants were ready for them. Lenin incorporated the land question into the revolutionary movement by his order: "Peasants, seize the land." This did not, however, make Bolshevism popular, the peasants remarking, "Lenin did not give us the land; we took it." The movement of the workmen to take possession of the factories was more properly attributed to the Bolsheviks, but it did not in my opinion make that party popular.

The General Social Programme: Ten Years' Trial.

It was, I think, the general social programme of the Moscow Revolutionaries which commended itself to the people, which slowly took shape and may be judged in the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, adopted July 10, 1918. The Bolsheviks have attempted to deal with the

fundamental problem, the abolition of exploitation of men by men, the entire abolition of the division of the people into classes, the suppression of exploiters, the establishment of a "Socialist Society." (Constitution, Article 1, chapter 2, paragraph 3.)

Great masses of the people, of course, remained in ignorance of the real meaning of "the establishment of a Socialist society." It was interpreted to them as being the organisation of a State on principles very similar to their village communes, and the peasants

thinking that as good or better than any alternative they had met yet did not give their allegiance to it, but showed a readiness to see whether it would work. They knew that no Government in Russia had thus far been satisfactory so they said they would give the Bolsheviks ten years before they would judge if it was really good or not. Such patience was not found in Moscow, nor apparently in foreign countries.

In Line with Russian Sentiment Against War.

Under the Federal System great liberty was given to each province and county for the development of its own ideas and government, and in this way the difficult problems connected with mixed racial populations were partly solved.

The breaking up of the Empire into small units and their reunion into the Socialist Federated Republic gave support to one of the chief causes of Bolshevik popularity; that the war which was begun by the Tsar should be ended by the people; their avowed intention of "breaking secret treaties, or organising on a wide scale the fraternisation of the workers and peasants of the belligerent armies, and of all efforts to conclude a general democratic peace without annexations or indemnities, upon a basis of the free determination of the peoples." Constitution—article 1, chapter 3, paragraph 4 coincided with the Russian sentiments on war. Accordingly the treaty of Brest-Litovsk came as no surprise, and I heard in all the time I was in Russia no workman or peasant disparage it.

The Generous Educational Programme.

The educational programme of the Bolsheviks commended itself to the people as being the most generous that had been placed before the public, and the zeal with which it was carried out seemed to the people to indicate that the energies of the Government were turning principally to internal reforms. The wishes of the people were studied, not only in broad principles, but in details. "For the purpose of enabling the workers to hold free meetings the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic offers to the working class and the poorest peasantry furnished halls, and takes care of their heating and lighting appliances." (Constitution—article 2, chapter 5, paragraph 15.) Libraries were opened in

the villages and theatres in all the towns and were maintained at the public expense.

The First Real Test of Popularity.

The popularity which the Bolshevik Government earned by its measures was not seriously tested till the spring of 1918, because it had no serious rivals who could call for the allegiance of the people on the strength of their programme for internal reforms. In the early summer, when civil war was financed from abroad and supported at home by large sections of the upper classes, the first real test came. Districts which had tried both the Bolshevik régime and that set up under the Czechs when free to do so reverted to Bolshevism. The Czechs were forced to retire from the Volga to the Urals because of uprisings among the people. The Soviet of Vladivostok was returned at the July election though the "Reds" were in prison. From the Urals to the eastern coast the people were discontented with the directorate and the dictatorship and preferred a return to the Soviets.

No body of people I met feared the Bolshevik Government except the rich merchant and landowning classes, and among them I noticed a phenomenon not uncommonly seen in the last few years, that supreme sacrifices are easier to ask for and easier to make in many cases than smaller ones. When all rich people were losing their property it was not in accordance with the temperament of the better Russian to display great grief at an irreparable loss. I think there was hardly more grumbling than occurred in England over the Budgets and the Insurance Act of a recent Government. Through their losses some perceived, often with mixed feelings, the increasing sense of equality, and many contrasted the smallness of their loss with the great sacrifice of the war.

Bolshevik Finance.

The Bolsheviks, in the opinion of the writer, used the repudiation of the foreign debts as a measure of internal politics, when the country was loath to assume any obligations contracted by the Tsar, but would in time have persuaded the people willingly to pay interest on the foreign loans because they realised that no further money would be lent to them unless they did.

Bearing in mind the exhausted condition of Russia due to the

war, the lack of commodities due to the isolation caused by Allied blockade after November, 1917, and the disturbance in industry which accompanies civil war (especially if financed from abroad), I believe that the condition of finances under the Bolsheviki may compare favourably with that of any administration in the last sixty years in Russia except under Ministers of Finance Kankrin and Reiter, or with the present administration in Siberia before it reintroduced vodka distilling as a source of revenue. It is possible that new criteria may have to be formed before it is wise to come to definite and final judgments regarding the financial condition of a community that hopes "to establish a Socialist society" and eliminate the use as far as possible of currency.

THE PEOPLE'S RUSSIAN INFORMATION BUREAU.

For particulars apply 152 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

A Weekly Bulletin and up-to-date News and Literature.

Publications:—

British Consul Replies to Anti-Bolshevik Slanders	...	Price	3½d. post free.
"Russia and the Allies," by F. Seymour Cocks	...	"	3½d. "
"The Russian Plan for the League of Nations," by G. Tchicherine	...	"	2½d. "
Maxim Litvinoff on Soviet Russia...	...	"	1½d. "
British Soldiers in Russia	...	"	1d. "
			2s. 8d. per 100

List of further publications on application.

Trade Terms for quantities.